

PLASTER FELL WHEN SULLIVAN FAMILY SNEEZED

By F. J. SULLIVAN.

WE'VE just been plastered. The wife was bound and determined, had her mind set on it, and when Ella gets her bean working on a notion the notion has got no more chance of not coming true than Christmas has of coming on Ash Wednesday.

Well, I'll say Ella was right. She ain't right often—anyway not when she disagrees with me—but on the proposition of getting plastered she had the dose cinched like the fellow that played Man o' War for a plaster. Even her mother admitted we needed plastering, and that was the first time she and me agreed since the night Pansy Olivia was born and we both agreed she was a girl.

The only thing that made the old lady agree about the plastering was the accident to Aunt Lizzie Plamm the time she came down from Gloversville to spend a week and take in the Hippodrome and Riverside Drive on a bus.

You see, Aunt Lizzie has a sockful salted away in a bank up in Gloversville. She was a forelady in a glove factory up there from the time old man Glover started the town until she got well along in her eighties and figured she might as well start enjoying herself.

What with bonuses and pensions and stock and saving her dough, she not having enough husband to support, she raked in enough ducats to make Bradstreet rate her 'way up with the bootleggers and bankers. From the time she first heard about Pansy Olivia she always said that if she lived 'til Pansy got her growth she would send her to a choice of three colleges, to wit, Vassar, Oberlin or the I. C. S.

This took quite a load off Ella's and my mind, even though Aunt Lizzie kept saying that Pansy wouldn't get a Buffalo nickel if she ever bobbed her hair, used paint and powder or wore skirts up above her instep. I don't mean Aunt Lizzie wanted Pansy not to wear any skirts at all above her instep;

Usual Idea of Chaos Seemed Mild When Household Faced Improvements of Home Forced From Landlord After a Successful Plot—Pansy Olivia's Future Wrecked When Aunt Lizzie Plamm's Brown Alpaca Was Ruined by Splashing Soup—Botticelli's Art a Mad Riot

the wife and me wouldn't of stood for that, of course. What I mean is that the bottom of Pansy's instep—no, the top of her skirt—oh shucks, she wanted Pansy to wear long skirts, that's what she wanted.

The old lady used to worry more about our troubles than we did ourselves, so naturally it took a load off her mind too.

Then Aunt Lizzie came down and the plaster fell on her. It isn't no laughing matter, or else you could make a joke and say the plaster came down as well as Aunt Lizzie. We were just setting down to a nice supper of frankfurts and sauerkraut, Aunt Lizzie's favorite dessert, when the kid sneezed. We told her time and time again she shouldn't do that, ever since the night I coughed and jarred a couple of feet of ceiling loose. You know how kids are, though; they always pick the wrong time to do things—say swear words before the minister and things like that.

Well, sir, no sooner did Pansy sneeze than I bet half the ceiling came down on Aunt Lizzie. It wasn't the seven stitches they had to take in her bean that she minded, but the darn plaster fell in her soup and splashed it all over her brown alpaca, and Aunt Lizzie thought more of that brown alpaca than she did of her scalp, and when she came to and saw the soup—and it happened to be one of Ella's particularly oily soups—all over her front, she set up one yowl and passed out for another half hour.

Well, you know how women are when

they get money. Suspicious of everybody. Think everybody is plotting and scheming to get it. She said we fixed it so the plaster would fall. Well, afterward when I got to thinking about it and decided that it was a pretty rough crack to make, I told Ella I was sorry I didn't think in time and give Aunt Lizzie a real wallop with a piece of the plaster while she was cuckoo, and then maybe we would have got the dough, without any strings being tied on Pansy's hair, or skirts.

So she went home and Pansy started a hullabaloo because she'd set her heart on going to the I. C. S.

That was how Ella's mother and me came to agree about the plastering being needed.

Well, the dining room looked like a cross between Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Wreck of the Phosphorus. Every time the woman upstairs ran the carpet sweeper over the floor we had to run and hide beneath the table. We lost quite a lot of time that way, too, because the dame upstairs was neat as a pin. The piece that fell on Aunt Lizzie started the rest of the ceiling going, or coming, and you never could tell when you were going to get beamed with a lump of plaster.

So along about the middle of September Pincus, the landlord, came in with a new lease in one hand and a smile in the other—I mean on his map. He explained about the high cost of labor, coal, janitors, elevator men, electricity, mas, tutti frutti ice cream and misses' and children's fall suitings, and then told us that owing to all these things

we would be raised \$200 a year from \$1,200.

Ella always does the talking to Pincus. Ella always does the talking to anybody.

"That's an awful rent, Mr. Pincus."

Then Pincus explained about the labor, coal, tutti frutti ice cream, &c., all over again.

Then Ella and Pincus went to the mat and battled for an hour or so. I give Pincus credit. He didn't blow up as soon as I would of. But he finally did.

"Well," he said, "all I got to say is, if you don't like it, phooey!"

And he made a phooey motion with his hands, which I judged meant we could pay \$1,400 or get out.

"Well, you needn't get sore," Ella harped; "all I asked you was would you do the apartment over for us."

Gives Family the High Sign When Landlord Is in Room

Pincus started in again on the coal. Ella grabbed him by the arm and pulled him down the hall. On the way she winked at me and said "Bronchitis!" Then she winked at Pansy and said "Hay fever!" Pansy and me weren't born yesterday. We didn't miff anything. Ella dragged Pincus into the dining room, otherwise known as the Chamber of Horrors.

"Now looka here, Mr. Pincus. Gaze on that!" she said and she shoved him beneath a loose section of plaster.

"Go ahead," she said to me and Pansy. I coughed and Pansy sneezed.

When Pincus came to we told him he was darn lucky a stranger wasn't beneath that plaster or he'd have had a nice lawsuit on his hands. The blow had Pincus a little daffy for a while and we figured it was a good idea to get all we could out of him while he was that way. So we made him sign an agreement to plaster the Chamber of Horrors, paper and paint all the other rooms, do the floors, put in a new sink and fix the bathtub, which was cracked like the Liberty Bell.

We told him he was signing a release to keep him from suing himself for damages sustained by falling plaster. I told Ella that while we had him we ought to get him to sign an agreement to send Pansy to college, seeing that we had muffed a chance like that when Aunt Lizzie was knocked out, but Ella was afraid the shock of a paper like that might bring Pincus to, and she wanted him to stay under the effects of the plaster for a day or two.

Of course Pincus couldn't go back on his signature in black and white, and we had it. He was a better loser than I thought he'd be. But he had a heck of a time explaining to the other folks in the house how he came to be doing all the repairing for us. There was quite a lot of talk.

"Well, dearie," Ella says on the first of October, as I started for work, "you prob'ly won't know the old place when you come home to-night. Don't get likelier up now, and don't get in any accidents. I want you to see the improvements before anything happens to you. The workmen'll be here any minute."

Did Not Stop at Luke's That Night as He Usually Did

That night I came home ahead of time, not stopping at Luke's as was my wont. But nothing was changed. Only Ella looked as if she'd swallowed something by mistake.

"Where's the new paper?" I asked her.

Ella only gave me a dirty look.

"Well," I says, "I didn't do it, whatever it is. You don't have to look at me like that."

"You said it, you didn't do it," Ella came back. "That's just exactly what."

"What's that?" I says.

"The furniture," Ella says. "You didn't move it. You might of known the workmen wasn't going to."

"I didn't know no sucha thing," I comes back at her. "Why didn't you say something?"

"I been saying something to you ever since I married you," Ella says, "and it don't seem to do no good. Anyway there's no use arguing. They came and the furniture wasn't moved out of the room, and they went away. Said they didn't move."

"What's the idea?" I says. "Were they crippled or something?"

"No," Ella says, "but it ain't their business to move things, they said."

Pansy, who was sitting in the sink doing her algebra, butted in here.

"The poor sumps would have a fat chance in a checker game, wouldn't they, Pa?"

This quaint little sally from our pride and joy sort of cleared up the atmosphere, and Ella and me laughed.

"Well," I says, "lets get to work, then."

Well, it turned out finally that Ella didn't

You tackle the piano, Ella, and I'll take care of the waste baskets and chairs."

Pretty soon we had all the furniture from the Chamber of Horrors piled up in the kitchen and the maid's room, the latter being a flossy monniker Ella tackled onto a clothes closet to show off before her friends. We never had a maid.

Went to Get a Drink of Water And Ruined the Family Library

Everything went all right considering, except when I went to get a drink of water and turned on the faucet in the dark, forgetting that Ella had piled all six of the books in our library in the sink. But we don't read much anyhow, as I told Ella, so it didn't matter if they were wet or dry. But Ella says it wasn't so much that, but she knew the covers would run, and they'd look terrible in the bookcase.

Well, next morning everything was set for the cripples. But I wasn't too sure that anything would be done when I got home. But I was wrong.

They had the walls all scraped in fine shape and the scraped paper piled on the piano and on the beds. And the Chamber of Horrors was plastered!

"To-morrow," Ella said, quite excited, "Botticelli will do the chamber."

"What?" I says.

"Botticelli," says Ella.

"I give up," I says. "What's the answer?"

"It's a man," Ella says; "one of the painters."

"Is that his name?" I asked her.

She said it was.

"Well," I says, "it sounds to me like a soup or something you play on."

"It wouldn't if you knew anything," she snapped. "He's named for a great painter, a great French painter."

"If they wanted to name him after a painter," I came back, "why didn't they name him after one people could pronounce? Like Thos. Cusack or O. J. Gude or Sherwin Williams."

"It's all right, Pa," Pansy says here. "His last name's Murphy."

"He's a young art student," Ella said. "He says he's going to have a career but he's short of cash and has to work as a paper-hanger or a painter every once in a while to make enough money to pay for his art."

"In that case, why don't he try plumbing?" I says; "but then I suppose he wants to keep up on his paintings. Is his last name really Murphy?"

Ella said it was.

"Then," I says, sternly, "how come you call him Bo—Bott—how come you call him by his first name?"

"He likes every one to," Ella explained. "It's more artistic, he says. He even wants the other paperhangers to call him Botticelli."

"But they don't, Pa," Pansy puts it; "they call him Bott for short."

"Anyway he's got swell ideas," says Ella, "and he's going to make this house look like something."

"I know the answer to that one," I says. "What are you talking about?" asks the wife.

"What the house is going to look like," I came back.

"Don't show your coarseness before your child," Ella snapped.

"I know what you mean, Pa," puts in Pansy here, "hell!"

Going out next morning I says to Ella: "You let Bott try out his swell ideas some place else and stick to straight painting and paperhanging here. We have to live in this place, he don't."

No use talking to a woman, especially if she married you. I got home that night and the Chamber of Horrors was a sight. The ceiling was all smudged and the walls looked like enlargements of some of Pansy's drawings she made before she went to kindergarten.

"Did Bott run amuck?" I asked Ella.

"Run amuck? No. Why should he?"

"The ceiling. It's all smudged."

"That's not smudge. That's clouds. It's supposed to be the sky. It'll look swell when it's drier."

"What do the walls represent?" I managed to ask.

"That's a Revel in the Garden of Ban," Ella said, reciting it as if she had learned it by heart.

"Which one is Johnson?" I says.

"What are you talking about? Ella says. 'Ban Johnson. Didn't you say this represented his garden?'"

"I didn't say anything about him," crabbled Ella. "Ban was a Greek god and he used to run around after the Greek flappers playing an accordion."

Well, it turned out finally that Ella didn't

know what she was talking about as usual. Pansy said the fellow's name wasn't Ban at all, but Pan, and he played a cornet instead of an accordion.

But that didn't make the Chamber of Horrors look any better. It was a real Chamber of Horrors now. Streaks of all colors of paint every which way, chasing each other across the walls. No system, no head or tail to it at all. Looked like an Easter egg. Ella said Bott told her it was Post Impressionistic.

Bott had done the bathroom, too. He said this represented "Nude Entering a Bath-tub." He said the subject was appropriate. I couldn't see as it was any different from the Rebel in Ban's Garden; it just looked to me like the colors had ran on a checker-board.

But we did have the Chamber of Horrors plastered, even if the new ceiling did represent the sky. It couldn't fall, anyhow, and we needn't worry any more about eating our meals beneath instead of on the table.

"Get the stuff out of your room to-night," Ella said, "and move it into Pansy's room to be ready for Botticelli to-morrow morning."

I got up on my high horse.

"Is my room going to represent anything?" I asked, quiet enough.

"I guess he's going to do something about animals," says Ella. "He said something about the Nine Mooses, two on a wall and the extra one in the clothes closet."

Objected to the Nine Mooses And Insisted on Wallpaper

Well, we battled an hour or so before we finally found out that Ella was wrong again, as usual. Pansy said Bott meant a family of Greek janes by the name of the Nine Mooses.

"Are they going to be nude?" I says.

"What difference does it make to you if they are or not?" barked Ella, "you're a married man, ain't you?"

"Yes," I said. "Thanks to your mother, I am. But my room is going to be papered with paper."

Every once in a while I have to put my foot down hard and show Ella who's who in our flat.

Pansy sided with me.

"Good work, Pa," she says, "can't you do something about my room? He's going to do the Life and Times of Catherine the Great in there."

Well, I couldn't figure any objection to that. Pansy ought to know her history and if the simp would of only painted Kitty's times so that the child could get an idea of life in those days, I wouldn't of minded. But I knew he'd just slap a lot of paint on the wall and call it the first thing he put his finger on blindfolded. I didn't say anything though.

Bott wouldn't touch my room. I imagine he figured me out for a low brow. One of the regular paperhangers papered my room, and done well except that he put the paper on upside down and had the roses all growing south instead of north, as they usually do.

They fussed around the flat for a week, and I got pretty tired of coming home nights and moving things from one room to another. One night the last straw came. I was home.

"They done the floors to-day," Ella said, "don't they look nice?"

"Hm," I said, sniffing the air. Something smelled familiar to me. I turned to Ella.

"What did they use on them?" I says.

"Shellac," Ella says. "What did you think they used on floors, cologne?"

"Where'd they get the shellac?" I says, looking at Ella sternly.

"They had some," she says. "And when they went short they used some they found in your clothes closet."

Used His Cocktail Material To Varnish the Flat's Floors

"I knew it," I yowled. "They've gone and used the shellac I was saving for cocktails."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, shut up," Ella yelled. "You can get more, can't you?"

But that wasn't all. They had also gone and used a gallon and a half of my home brew to varnish the floors with. Now that it's all over with and I'm calm, the floors do look good, but believe me, I was hot at the time about it.

Next day I stayed home and waited for Bott and his cripples. They didn't work at our house that day, nor any day since. After they had went I went into the dining room and started to tell Ella what I thought of her. We got to making a lot of noise and stamping around quite a bit. All of a sudden there was a cracking noise. We knew it of old.

"Under the table!" we both yelled instinctively.

We just got there in time. The ceiling came down in one place. There wasn't enough left of Bott's Rebel in Ban's Garden when we crawled out and blew the lime dust out of our eyes to shake a stick at.

Well, to make a long story short, I'm doing the place over by myself. I'm doing it nights after work, and I'm doing it right. Ella is in a sanitarium for a while and Pansy has gone up with Aunt Lizzie Plamm, who thought it over and decided we hadn't tried to kill her after all.

Ramblin' 'Round

By EDWARD ANTHONY.

HERE we are in the reading room of the Forty-second street library. To our right is the most fascinated reader in the world. He is gripping a big fat volume that must be the most diverting book ever written. He couldn't be more enthralled if he were reading one of our articles, or his grandfather's will bequeathing him a yacht and a private island in the South Sea group. Look at that man read, will you? It is a pleasure to watch him. What is he reading, anyhow? We must edge over and take a look. Ha! We see a picture. But the angle is bad and we can't make out the picture. We shall have to look over his shoulder. There, that is better. Yes, much better! It is a picture of a whale. The man, it seems, is reading a book on whale hunting—or does one fish for whales? It would require pretty large worms for bait, it seems to us.

But that is beside the point. What we are trying to say is that the man with the book has given us an idea. If one can have so much fun reading about whales, what a lark it would be to see a real live one and write about him! Comes then and there the determination to hunt up a whale somewhere and spend the afternoon with him. There ought to be a whale of a story in that. But where can one find a whale? As if we don't know! In the Aquarium, of course. There must be one there. So we gather up our belongings and make for the nearest subway station.

Well, here we are at the Aquarium. There are a number of benches ranged around the circular building and every seat is occupied. What are these men doing out here when there are whales to be seen inside? Have they no imagination?

"WELL, here we are in the lobby. The place looks the same as it did when we visited it as a kid years ago. We wonder if on that childhood visit we acted like that little boy over there to our left who is being led out by his mother. 'Mommer!' he is crying, 'buy me a fish!'"

"Shush! you silly boy!" she shushes. "The fish are not for sale!"

"Then buy me a turtle or a lizard," is what he will say in reply if he is resourceful. But no. He sticks to his cry of "Mommer, buy me a fish!"—(what a joyous refrain for a ballad!)—continues. Mommer solves the problem by promising to buy him a fish some other time. It takes a lot of money, she explains, and she'll have to go home for it. If we had the nerve we'd offer her the money. We'd love to see that kid get his fish. As long as she didn't buy our whale we wouldn't mind. The kid doesn't need it; he'll get whaled when he gets home.

The kid is unconvinced. He doesn't say so in so many words but his plaintive cry of "Mommer, buy me a fish!"—(what a joyous refrain for a ballad!)—continues. Mommer solves the problem by promising to buy him a fish some other time. It takes a lot of money, she explains, and she'll have to go home for it. If we had the nerve we'd offer her the money. We'd love to see that kid get his fish. As long as she didn't buy our whale we wouldn't mind. The kid doesn't need it; he'll get whaled when he gets home.

Well, having seen a kid blubber, we shall proceed to see whale blubber. Here's a uniformed attendant. "Where are the whales?" we are about to ask him when it occurs to us that anyone ought to be able to find, without assistance, as big a fish as a whale—or is it an animal?

Here we are in the center of the main floor. What is that grunting we hear? The sea lions. There are two of 'em. Why do they grunt? Lions, we thought, roared. And where are their manes? Nature puzzles us more every day.

Where are the whales? That looks like a good-sized tank to our left. They must be in there. Let us investigate. No, these can't be whales. They are too small. Can they be feeding whales just hatched? No, we are afraid not. If they were just hatched there'd be bits of shoop in the water, and besides—and this, of course clinches the thing—there is a sign saying they are seals. Seals, you will recall, are the things sealing-wax is made of. There are useful enough creatures but we are looking for whales.

A man to our right wants to know whether a seal is a fish or an animal. He addresses his appeal to a learned looking fellow who decides, after a moment's deliberation, that it is best to call a seal a mammal and let it go at that. One might also call 'em creatures, it seems to us. That is

always safe. But mammals will do. It is a pleasant enough word.

Gosh, look at that frisky seal leap! He must be healthy to do that. What wonderful mammalade he'd make!

And still no whales. We must be looking in the wrong sector. Well, we'll try the fish department. A whale is probably a fish; that must be it. The fish are upstairs, we are told. We wonder, by the way, how they climb the stairs. Still a fish could scale 'em.

Well, here we are in the fish department. Look at that school of gold fish! That one over there with the little specks on his nose must be the teacher.

If there is a lovelier sight than a gang of gold fish with the sunlight playing on 'em we'd like to see it.

But, gosh, we are wrong! These aren't goldfish after all. The sign says they are *curassius auratus*. But they look like gold fish. We'll bet the resemblance would fool you too.

Here are the angel fish, otherwise called, as we need hardly tell you, *pomocanthus paru*. These may be angel fish, but we think that flying fish, with their wings, are more entitled to the appellation. But this is needless frivolity.

THERE is an interesting conversation going between two *calamus bajando*, or pogies, as they are scientifically called.

"Don't those speckled trout in the next cage make you tired, Phil?" one of 'em is saying. "They're all puffed up because their signs reads 'the most beautiful trout in America.'"

"I'll say they make me tired, Lou," says Phil. "If I was them trout I wouldn't be so proud of my freckles. I'd make a bee line for the first drug store and get something to remove 'em."

"You said it, Phil. They look troutlandish. If I looked like that I'd go down myself."

"Same here, Lou. Yet every one stands in front of their first window and admires 'em. If a *calamus bajando* ain't as good looking as a *salvelinus fontinalis*—I think that's the Latin for trout—I'll eat my shirt."

"That's the way I feel about it, Phil. Yet a dozen guys haven't stopped to look at us in a week. If this keeps up I'm gonna move outa this aquarium. I want appreciation. And, besides, the housin' problem here is be-ginnin' to get serious. I hear a gang of *chilisausa jazzarinos* are movin' in next week. And then there's that crowd of *billigato chikkencocketti* comin' up from Florida in a month. If they try to put 'em in here, there's gonna be a fight."

"Count on me, Lou. I've got a mean left fin. The last fish I hit went to the dry dock for repairs."

Song of the Neglected Aquarium Fish.

Gimme a tumble! I'm as good as anybody here!

Lookit how nice I glide along and lookit how I steer.

And watch this dive! I didn't splash enough to fill a thimble.

Show me a fish on land or sea that's anywhere as nimble!

Stop lookin' at that gold fish! In a battle he's a quitter!

Remember that a thing ain't gold because you see is glitter!

I've got as nice a Latin name as any fish a-swimmin'.

At fetchin' bottom I can give the cleverest a trimmin'.

I come from decent people (though I have no pedigree).

And though I ain't no beauty, there are homlier than me.

I'm mannerly as any (I have very seldom cursed).

And never have I bit a fish unless he bit me first!

The ungrammatical phrasing of the fish that wrote that song is surprising, to put it mildly. A fish that has travelled in a school all his life ought to know better.

UT this all beside the point. We are supposed to be looking for the whales.